

Camera traps help nab rhino poachers



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Camera traps installed in the Rajiv [Gandhi](#) Orang [National](#) Park in Mangaldoi in Assam helped convict two poachers for illegal entry into the park with arms and killing rhinos. The Mangaldoi Session Court citing the [Wildlife](#) Protection [Act](#), 1972 convicted Haren Daimari and Dharmeswar Basumatary with two years of rigorous imprisonment and slapped a fine of INR 25000 each. The judgment was sentenced by Session Judge G Baruah.

In January 2011 some 60 camera traps were installed in the park by [Aaranyak](#), a Society for Biodiversity [Conservation](#). A team of researchers during routine examination [found](#) images of three poachers when they immediately brought the incident under the notice of the authorities. Captured images revealed three poachers with two [rifles](#) inside the park. [Aaranyak](#) and the Assam Forest Department has been using camera traps in the park to monitor tigers and other animals since 2008.

Following the information relayed by the researchers Sushil Daila, DFO ([Wildlife](#)), Mangaldoi in an effort to create public awareness released a poster containing the captured images of the poachers requesting the villagers to help identify them. A cash award of INR 25000 to the informer was also announced. The poachers however, surrendered with arms. A case was registered [against](#) them in the Mangaldoi Session Court that subsequently led to their imprisonment.



“It has been a major [success](#) for the Assam Forest Department in convicting the poachers as usually conviction rate is very low in wildlife cases. This time due to the evidence obtained from automatic camera traps, the poachers had but little option to surrender and face conviction,” said M Firoz Ahmed, a senior biologist with [Aaranyak](#) who leads camera trapping exercises at Orang. The conviction he added was particularly possible due to the keen leadership of the Divisional Forest Officer, the team work of the staff at Orang and the evidence collated from the camera traps.

The camera trapping exercise was undertaken with support received from Panthera, a non-profit based in New York and the David Shepherd [Wildlife](#) Foundation, [UK](#). The cameras used in the exercise were designed by Panthera. A more effective model is undergoing tests by Panthera which will be able to detect poachers in the forest and then beam the images onto a computer or smart phone instantly, thereby saving on time allowing the forest staff on duty to help neutralize the threat. A joint partnership of [Aaranyak](#) and Panthera would [soon](#) provide some of the cameras to the Forest Department.

[Aaranyak](#) is also assisting the Assam Forest Department in apprehending poachers involved in rhino poaching in [Kaziranga National](#) Park by providing support from its dog squad, named 'K9'. Currently, two Belgian Malinois, Jorba and Babli are in service. The dogs are making a huge contribution towards controlling wildlife crimes, sending a strong message to poachers and [smugglers](#) that there is an increase in efforts to track them down. Some 15 poachers or their handlers have been tracked by the dogs around [Kaziranga](#). Squad member Jorba incidentally helped the forest staff in tracking a poacher located about 1.5 kilometers away from the crime scene. The poacher was eventually cornered by the [guards](#) and killed in what resulted in an encounter when he attacked the [guards](#).

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Writes, edits and researches. In 2013 he was conferred the Rotary International District 3240 Young Achiever Award for his work in the area of environment and digital journalism. In 2006 he was awarded first in the category of Wildlife Photography by the Department of Environment & Forests and Tourism, Government of Assam.

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